

# Land Use Element

The Land Use Element along with the Circulation Element describe the basic framework for the physical development of the Town boundary as well as the Sphere of Influence and Urban Service Area. The Land Use Element establishes guidelines for the general distribution and limits the uses of land. The Circulation Element provides for the flow of people and goods within the Town.

The basic land use categories discussed in this element are residential/agricultural, institutional, commercial, and public utilities. Each of these categories is covered in a section setting forth goals, policies, implementation procedures, and including a description. Open space and recreation proposals are discussed in separate elements. The following general goals and policies formulate the framework of the various land uses within the Town.

## **GOALS:**

1. Provide residential uses among open spaces with the minimum public and private facilities and services necessary to serve Town residents on a continuing basis.
2. Facilities and services available from sources near the Town of Los Altos Hills should not be duplicated within the Town.

## **POLICIES:**

1. Land uses should maintain the rural open atmosphere, minimizing disturbance to natural terrain and vegetation. These uses should

maximize compatibility of development with the natural environment through site design, architecture and landscaping.

2. In addition to single-family residences, uses within the Planning Area should include:
  - a. Accessory uses such as small-scale crop and tree farming, keeping of horses and other domestic animals, and other agricultural pursuits.
  - b. Private and public park and recreational uses necessary to conveniently serve the residents.
  - c. Public and private services and facilities including schools, churches, fire stations, community centers, etc., needed locally to serve Town residents.
3. Large non-residential structures should be subjected to site development review to insure compatibility with the residential character of the community.

The Town of Los Altos Hills is designated for primarily residential uses with small agricultural uses generally associated with rural areas, and open spaces. Other uses, such as religious institutions, were established prior to the incorporation of the Town. New uses proposed for the Town must receive a Use Permit from the Planning Commission. The following sections have been developed based on the land use goals and policies previously discussed.

## RESIDENTIAL AREAS

### GOALS:

1. Maintain the rural atmosphere associated with established residential areas of the community and ensure a similar atmosphere in future residential developments.
2. Assure that all residential development occurs in a manner that minimizes disturbance to natural terrain, vegetation and wildlife while maximizing preservation of natural beauty and open space.

### POLICIES:

1. Within Los Altos Hills and its Sphere of Influence dwelling types are limited to single-family detached residences and secondary dwelling units.
2. The minimal parcel size is one net acre with a minimum lot unit factor\* of 1.0.
3. The amount of development permitted on a property decreases as the steepness of the land increases.
4. Residential densities and individual lot development is based on evaluation of topography, vegetative cover, soils and geology, and any other significant physical limitations.

*\*Lot Unit Factor (LUF) is the number of lots in a given parcel. Some lots with a LUF less than 1.0 were created early in the Town's history. These lots are considered non-conforming and their development is restricted accordingly. Lots with LUF less than 1.0 may not be created today.*

5. Steep slopes, canyons, ravines, natural swales, drainage channels, and geologic hazard areas should be left undisturbed and preserved as conservation easements or open space.
6. The natural character of ridges and hilltops should be preserved to the maximum extent feasible.

**PROCEDURES:**

1. Within those areas designated for "very low to low density" residential use, net lot area\* shall not be less than one acre (43,560 square feet) per dwelling unit. In addition, the average net lot area for this residential category in subdivisions will increase as the average slope increases, based on the following slope-density standards:

<u>Average Slope of Land to be Subdivided</u>	<u>Average Net Lot Size</u>
0 – 10% slope	one acre
10 – 50% slope	an increase from one acre to seven acres, based on the average slope of the land
Over 50% slope	should generally not be developed for residential purposes

\*Net lot area is the acreage remaining after deductions are made for public or private roads, driveway easements serving more than one lot, and park or other land dedications.

2. As much as possible, hillsides, canyons, and ravines with slopes of 30% or greater will be kept free of structures and left in a natural condition with respect to terrain and vegetation. These areas are classified as

"open space or conservation areas." In conservation easements, recreational uses may be appropriate with proper drainage and erosion control measures.

3. The minimum lot area for the residential area immediately adjacent to Los Altos Hills should be no less than one-half acre.

**DESCRIPTION:**

Residential areas of low intensity are the predominate land use in the Town. More rugged ridge and valley areas to the west and southwest are designated ***Open Space Preserve***. In general, these areas are not intended primarily for residential use.

Los Altos Hills is a transition area between the more developed areas of Los Altos and Palo Alto to the north and east, and the rugged open space owned by Mid Peninsula Regional Open Space District to the south and west. Residential areas in the northern and eastern parts of the Town tend to be more developed, while areas in the southern and western tend to be more rural and less developed.

The Neary Quarry has been of concern to the Town due to problems with trucks, noise, dust, and aesthetics. A portion of the quarry has been sold to the Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District. The remaining 78 acres is proposed to be subdivided into residential lots. The subdivision would include a private lake.

Much of Los Altos Hills is along the lower eastern slope of the Santa Cruz Mountain range. In times of wet weather, water drains from the mountains to Adobe Creek and other arterial creeks which flow into the San Francisco Bay. It is the intent of the Town to allow as much of the drainage as possible to follow natural creek channels, although these paths occasionally cross residents' land.

Superimposed upon the residential land use areas on the Plan Diagram is a symbol representing open space conservation areas. Within these areas, special measures should be taken to conserve the cultural quality and avoid environmental problems. Residences should be placed on more buildable areas and carefully sited to preserve existing trees, native vegetation and wildlife habitat areas. The open space conservation areas, as private permanent open spaces, can accommodate a limited variety of recreational uses suited to the natural terrain such as riding and hiking trails, scenic walks, and picnic and informal recreational activities. In many instances, these open spaces would be ideal locations for public trails and paths. In already subdivided areas, programs to assure retention of these open spaces will require the interest and cooperation of residents. The value of insuring these open spaces accrues largely to the adjoining property owners.

## **INSTITUTIONAL USES**

### **GOALS:**

1. Provide for those institutions that are for the use of local residents and in harmony with the residential character of the community.

2. Ensure that institutions are conveniently served by roadways and an efficient network of trails and paths.
3. Ensure that institutions will properly coincide with adjacent land uses.

**POLICIES:**

1. Only those institutional uses that are necessary to serve local residents, such as elementary schools, churches, governmental buildings, and fire stations should be permitted within the Town boundaries;
2. Major community facilities should be served directly by collector roads, or where possible, arterial roads. Emphasis should be on reasonable convenience. Prime consideration should be given to compatibility with adjacent land uses and with preserving the rural atmosphere of the Town.
3. **Fremont Hills Country Club and horse stables . . .**
4. Public schools should make recreation areas and facilities available for use during non-school hours.
5. Work with school districts in the design and development of schools to provide for the Town's needs for recreation, meeting places, etc.
6. Public buildings should be of a size and scale conducive to maintaining the rural atmosphere of Los Altos Hills. The architectural design of institutional buildings should be similar to and compatible with adjacent residences.

**DESCRIPTION:**

The minimum institutional facilities necessary to serve the residents of the planning area are indicated on the Plan Diagram and are located to preserve the basic residential character and rural atmosphere of the planning area. The institutions that presently, and/or may in the future, require space within the community may include schools, churches, fire stations, and Town government buildings.

**SCHOOLS****GOALS:****POLICIES:****PROCEDURES:****DESCRIPTION:**

***Palo Alto Unified School District*** – Based on the holding capacity and standards for ratio of K-6 students per housing unit of the area within the Palo Alto Unified School District, an additional elementary school is proposed, in addition to the district schools presently serving Los Altos Hills residents.

***Los Altos Elementary School District*** – For the area covered by the Los Altos Elementary School District, the holding capacity and ratio of K-6 students per housing unit indicates that the existing school, Bullis-Purissima, is sufficient to serve the needs of the Town.



***Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District*** – The district plans to handle the projected increased enrollment by utilizing the full holding capacity of sites outside the planning area. No sites are proposed within the planning area. This appears consistent with Town policy for limited services within the area.

***Foothill Junior College District*** – It is proposed that no further expansion of District facilities occur within the Los Altos Hills Planning Area beyond those which can be reasonably accommodated on the existing college site. Daytime enrollment in 1993 was (?) and total evening and daytime enrollment approximately (?). It is Town policy to work closely with the District to ensure enrollment is held to a reasonable level, particularly with regard to the proposed circulation system to serve the college.

***Private Schools*** – Two private schools are located within the Town limits, Saint Nicholas School (K-8) and Pinewood High School. These will help alleviate the influx of students in the public schools.

## **TOWN GOVERNMENT**

### **GOALS:**

The principal goal is to expand the existing government and community facilities for the Town.

### **POLICIES:**

1. Maintain current level of service of the Town Government while allowing easier access to public records and documents.

2. Provide additional community serving facilities for a possible library and meeting place.

### **PROCEDURES:**

1. Survey properties within the Town, possibly adjoining Town Hall for a possible expansion of facilities.

### **DESCRIPTION:**

Present Town Hall facilities are inadequate to facilitate the current needs of the Town. Town Hall includes offices for the Building, Planning and Engineering Departments, as well as Council chambers for public hearings. An area should be provided for a public committee room and a Town library. The library would facilitate access to public documents and the storage and display of historical documents and artifacts. These added facilities would not change the level of services provided. However, they could help to enhance community identity and citizen involvement.

## **FIRE PROTECTION**

### **GOALS:**

1. Add emergency access throughout the Town.

### **POLICIES:**

1. Facilitate fire protection whenever possible.

## **PROCEDURES:**

1. Assist with the new fire station to be constructed on the Foothill College campus.
2. Complete a needed cross-tie between Elena and Edgecliff Roads, generally in the vicinity of Lupine Road.
3. Extension of Stonebrook Drive as a through road.
4. Provide emergency roads linking existing and future dead-end streets wherever it would reduce response time (see Appendix I.).
5. Continue to improve the water system as part of the site development and subdivision processes.
6. Require the provision of special fire protection devices for residences such as fire retardant roofing, interior sprinkler systems, special building materials, etc.

## **POLICE PROTECTION**

### **GOALS:**

1. Maintain the current level of service as required.

### **POLICIES:**

1. Evolve the contract with Santa Clara County with the change in security problems within the Town.

2. Include a Town Police Department if requested by members of the community and approved by the Town.

**procedures:**

1. Survey police reports and the community crime rate to determine the Town's needs for police protection.

**DESCRIPTION:**

The Town contracts with the Santa Clara County Sheriffs department for police service. If security problems should evolve to the point where the Town desires its own police department, there would be a need for police quarters. Any plan for improvement or expansion should give consideration to providing space to meet the need for any existing or future police quarters.

**CHURCHES**

**GOALS:**

If new facilities are proposed, specific site location and development should be accomplished in line with the objectives and principles of the General Plan. Which are???

**POLICIES:**

1. Maintain current facilities unless more facilities are needed by the community?

**PROCEDURES:**

?

**DESCRIPTION:**

Several churches and religious institutions are located within the Los Altos Hills Planning Area. Four of these institutions are within Town boundaries: Poor Clare's (Roman Catholic); Congregation Beth Am (Reform); the Chapel in the Hills (Episcopal); and Daughters of Charity which includes a retirement convent. Congregation Beth Am and the Chapel in the Hills have Conditional Use Permits issued by the Town, while Poor Clare Nuns existed prior to incorporation of the Town. Chapel in the Hills is the old Purissima School, a historical building.

**COMMERCIAL****GOALS:**

1. Limit commercial development in sections of the Los Altos Hills Planning Area which area adjacent to the Town boundaries.

**POLICIES:**

1. Encourage appropriate commercial development within the Los Altos Hills Planning Area.

**PROCEDURES:**

1. Encourage neighboring jurisdictions to strictly control those commercial or industrial activities that occur within those portions of their communities that are within the Los Altos Hills Planning Area in a manner that is as compatible as possible with land uses in Town.

## **DESCRIPTION:**

Commercial and industrial activities are located in the neighboring communities of Los Altos and Palo Alto. These include commercial activity in the City of Los Altos and light industrial activities in the Stanford Industrial Park, which is located within the City of Palo Alto. These commercial activities are located within the Town's Sphere of Influence.

The residents of the Los Altos Hills area find that the commercial activities and employment sources available from sources outside the Town adequately serve their needs and are reasonably accessible by major thoroughfares. The inconvenience of traveling greater distances for everyday shopping needs or to commute to employment centers is felt to be a reasonable part of the lifestyle of area residents. Expansion of commercial activities into a low density residential area would be a negative effect on the existing rural residential character of the Town.

## **PUBLIC UTILITIES**

### **GOALS:**

1. Ensure that public utilities will be provided in a manner that will adequately serve all residents, while minimizing the visual impact of the utilities on the community.
2. Provide for public health and safety, and to prevent biologically harmful or visible degradation of the area's natural environment in the development of public utilities.

**POLICIES:**

1. All utility installations should be sited, designed, developed and landscaped so as to blend with the natural character of the vicinity.
2. Power transmission lines, power distribution lines, and telephone lines should be placed underground.
3. All new residences resulting from new subdivisions should be served by sanitary sewer trunk lines or other disposal systems meeting adequate health standards. Wherever the possibility of biological harm from septic tank use exists, to sanitary sewers should be established. Standards should reflect Santa Clara County Health Department requirements as well as Non-point Source and other regulations of the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

**PROCEDURES:**

1. Procedures that exist for the review of utility installations and/or extension should be carefully followed. In particular, each major utility should be subjected to thorough design review to assure aesthetic compatibility.
2. A systematic program for the undergrounding of all existing overhead lines should be developed and implemented.

### **DESCRIPTION:**

Purissima Hills County Water District provides service to the majority of the area with California Water Service handling the eastern and southeastern portions. In addition, trash collection, telephone service and gas and electric service are adequately provided throughout the community.

It is important to preserve the natural environment and rural atmosphere desired by the residents of the Town. This can be achieved through conditioning the installation and/or extension of utilities in sensitive areas. Standards for the extension of utilities, sewers in particular, should be based on health and safety considerations.